



AIR INTERDICTION FUNDAMENTALS

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The purpose of [interdiction](#) operations is to divert, disrupt, delay, and destroy, by either lethal or nonlethal means in order to achieve [objectives](#). Actions associated with one [desired effect](#) may also support the others.⁴ **Air interdiction (AI) is defined as “air operations conducted to divert, disrupt, delay, or destroy the enemy’s military potential before it can be brought to bear effectively against friendly forces, or to otherwise achieve objectives that are conducted at such distance from friendly forces that detailed integration of each air mission with the fire and movement of friendly forces is not required.”**⁵ AI [targets](#) may include fielded enemy forces or supporting [components](#) such as operational [command and control](#) (C2) nodes, communications networks, transportation systems, supply depots, military resources, and other vital infrastructure. When conducted as part of a [joint campaign](#), AI needs the direction of a single commander who can exploit and coordinate all the forces involved.⁶

The [commander, Air Force forces](#) (COMAFFOR) is normally the [supported commander](#) for the [joint force commander’s](#) (JFC’s) overall AI effort. When designated as the supported commander, the COMAFFOR will conduct [theater](#)-wide or [joint operations area](#)- (JOA-) wide AI to support the JFC’s overall theater objectives. With the preponderance of AI assets and the ability to plan, task, and control [joint air operations](#), the COMAFFOR can best plan and execute AI. The COMAFFOR recommends theater and/or JOA-wide targeting priorities and, in coordination with other component commanders, forwards the [air apportionment](#) recommendation to the JFC. The COMAFFOR plans and executes the interdiction effort in accordance with the JFC’s guidance.

⁴ [Joint Publication 3-03, Joint Doctrine for Joint Interdiction](#)

⁵ Not all air interdiction falls under the category of counterland. History has many examples of airpower interdicting the enemy’s air or sea lines of communication; these are actually counterair or countersea missions even though they may have an interdiction effect at the operational level. Additionally, some interdiction missions may be considered a subset of strategic attack.

⁶ Air Interdiction can also benefit from other airpower forces through space operations and cyberspace actions. [Annex 3-12, Cyberspace Operations](#) and [Annex 3-14, Space Operations](#) provide greater insight on the capabilities and integration of these forces.